

New Testament Life Lesson 2  
*The Messenger and the Most Important Message*  
Text: Matthew 1, Luke 1

Introduction

We've learned about lots of Bible people, but today our story is about someone who wasn't human. He was a different kind of creature – an angel.

Gabriel was a special angel. He always “stood in the presence of God.” That must mean he was close to God and was His special helper.

We don't know what he looked like, other than he was kind of scary because he had to keep telling people not to be afraid. Spending that much time in God's presence must have made him shine with God's glory, like Moses' face shone after he had been with God in Mt. Sinai.

We don't know what job Gabriel usually did, but in our story today we see him delivering messages – the most exciting and important messages ever delivered.

The Story

Gabriel's first stop was to give a message to an elderly Jewish couple. They seemed like ordinary people. Zacharias was a priest who served God faithfully in the temple. His wife Elisabeth was a nice lady, but both were sad because they were old and had never had a child.

They seemed ordinary – but they were about to be part of the most amazing and wonderful thing that had ever happened.

One day when Zacharias was in the temple doing his job, he had a vision. He saw the angel Gabriel standing by the altar. Can you imagine how he felt when he saw that glorious angel? He was terrified!

“Don’t be afraid, Zacharias,” Gabriel said. “You and Elisabeth will have a son and you will call his name John. He will make you very happy – and many other people will know joy because of him.”

The angel explained that this child would be the one the prophets told about. He would come before the Messiah and prepare the hearts of the people.

“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord,” he said. “He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”

Zacharias said, “But my wife and I are too old to have a child. How will I know this will happen?”

That was a pretty silly question since Gabriel just gave him a message from God. For God to send a special messenger with the news should certainly have been enough proof.

The angel thought so, too, because he said, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. He sent me to tell you this good news. Since you didn’t believe me, here’s the sign you asked for. You won’t be able to speak until these things I have told you about actually happen.”

Meanwhile, everyone who was worshipping and working outside the temple wondered what on earth had happened to Zacharias. He had been in the temple so long that they began to worry about him.

When he came out, they figured out that he had a vision, but he couldn’t tell them about it, because, just as Gabriel had said, he couldn’t say a word.

But it happened just as the messenger said. Elisabeth soon found that she was going to have a baby, even though she was too old. Nothing is impossible for God!

Meanwhile Gabriel made another visit to make the greatest announcement of all. For centuries God's people had been waiting for the Messiah. At last Gabriel came with the news that the Messiah would soon be born.

He came, not to a princess, or a society leader, but to a simple, poor young girl. Her name was Mary.

"Hail, you who are the most highly favored among all women," Gabriel said. "The Lord is with you."

Mary was frightened by the appearance of an angel saying such strange things to her.

"Don't be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God," Gabriel said. "You will have a baby and call his name 'Jesus.' He shall be great and shall be called the son of the highest. The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

"But, how can that be? I'm not married," Mary said.

"God can do anything," he answered. "The Holy Spirit will be the father of your baby. Your child will be the son of God."

He told her about her cousin Elisabeth, that she was having a miracle baby, too.

"For with God, nothing shall be impossible," he said.

"I am God's servant," Mary said. "Whatever He says is fine with me."

The angel left and soon Mary found it to be true. She was going to have a baby.

She went to her cousin Elisabeth's house for a visit. As soon as she walked in the door of the house and said, "hello," Elisabeth's baby jumped in her womb and right away Elisabeth was filled with God's spirit and began to prophesy.

“You are blessed among women,” she said to Mary. “Blessed is the child you carry. Why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord should come and visit me?”

Even before the Messiah was born, Elisabeth believed in him and worshipped him.

Mary praised God when she heard that. She stayed with Elisabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

Elisabeth’s time came and she had her baby. All her neighbors and family were happy for them and thanked God for this miracle child. When it was time to name him, they said, “Of course, he should be called Zacharias after his father.”

“No,” Elisabeth said. “We’ll call him John.” That was the name the angel gave him, and that was the sign that she and Zacharias believed he would be the special one who would go before the Messiah.

They asked Zacharias. He still couldn’t talk, but he wrote down on his tablet, “His name is John.”

As soon as he wrote that, he was able to talk again—and he certainly did talk. He began right away praising God and prophesying.

“You, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest, for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,” Zacharias said.

Meanwhile, Mary was not having such a good time. She knew the baby was God’s promised Messiah, but other people just thought she was a bad woman who was having a baby before she got married.

When her fiancé heard about it, he was upset. He didn’t want to humiliate Mary in front of everybody, so he made plans to break off their engagement quietly.

Gabriel had another message to deliver. This time he came to Joseph, the young carpenter who was engaged to Mary.

“Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife,” he said to Joseph in a dream. “Her child is God’s son and is the Messiah He has promised for so long. You will call him Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins.”

### The Life Lesson

Gabriel had important messages to deliver to John and Elisabeth, to Mary, and to Joseph. That important message is for you, too – the message that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus was more than a good man, a good teacher, or even a prophet who could do miracles. He is the one God promised to send from the beginning of the world. He came to pay the penalty so that God’s people could be saved from their sin. Sin doesn’t have to control us, and we don’t have to pay the death penalty our sin deserves.

Just as John, Elisabeth, Mary and Joseph believed God’s message about the Messiah, our part is to believe that Jesus is God’s son – our Messiah and our Savior from sin.

## Review Questions

What angel do we meet in our lesson today?

*Gabriel*

To whom did Gabriel first give a message?

*To a priest named Zacharias*

*What did Gabriel tell Zacharias?*

He and his wife Elizabeth would have a baby who would be the one who came before the Messiah.

What did Gabriel tell Zacharias to name the baby?

*John*

Why couldn't Zacharias talk?

*Because he asked for a sign that Gabriel's message would come true.*

Why was it a miracle for Zacharias and Elizabeth to have a baby?

*Because they were too old to have children.*

Who else did Gabriel visit?

*Mary*

What did Gabriel tell Mary?

*She would have a child who would be the Messiah.*

What did Gabriel tell Mary she was to name the baby?

*Jesus*

What did Gabriel say Jesus would do?

*Save His people from their sin.*